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Review of Wyoming: From Territory to Statehood

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By 1900 the state of Wyoming, without the agriculture, mining, or industry of other western states, was uniquely tied to the purse strings of Washington. Originally organized by the Union Pacific as it built through what was then Dakota Territory in 1867, nineteenth-century Wyoming has long been depicted as the product of the railroad and cattle industries. Gould, however, suggests that the success of the state instead hinged on the machine politics of Wyoming Senator Francis E. Warren.

Although much of the success of Warren's pork barrel politics occurred after the turn of the century, the groundwork was laid in Wyoming's first three decades. In the absence of local economic resources, Warren quickly realized the need of order and system for Wyoming to compete in Washington. Warren also rejected the narrowness of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and the individualism of Democratic leader Joseph M. Carey. Instead, Warren, looking at politics as a business, tried to land as many federal projects as possible for the Equality state. His legacy of federally funded forts, irrigation projects, public buildings for the state's towns, and offices for his friends (including Wyoming's only Supreme Court Justice, Willis Van Devanter) served the state long after his death in 1929.

Long out of print, Wyoming: From Territory to Statehood will provide a new generation of readers a thoroughly researched and well-written account of Wyoming's early political history. In so doing, Gould's book will also outfit new readers with a solid basis for understanding the Wyoming of today.

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